



The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

Tetzave 5784

Special Assignments

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered February 18, 1967)

Our Sidra of this morning manifests certain stylistic peculiarities which are deserving of our attention. Surprisingly, the name of Moses is not once mentioned in this Sidra. Instead, three times in succession God addresses Moses using the pronoun *v'attah*, “and thou,” as if to emphasize some special assignment given to Moses by God. Thus we read, *v'attah tetzaveh*, “and thou shalt command” the Children of Israel to bring olive oil for the Menorah; *v'attah hakrev*, “and thou shalt draw near” Aaron and his children to dedicate them to the priesthood; and *v'attah tedaber*, “and thou shalt speak” to all skilled artisans to prepare the vestments of priests and the furnishings of the Temple.

The Zohar too recognized the unusual construction of this passage, and attributed to the repetition of the pronoun *v'attah* great mystical significance, a *raza ilaah*, a supernal mystery whereby Moses was able to commune more directly with the Shechinah. In other words, the Zohar acknowledges, in mystical idiom, that we are here confronted by a special assignment given to Moses.

What Divine secrets is the Torah trying to reveal to us? Let us analyze each of these cases briefly and see what the Torah says to us today – openly, not esoterically.

Let us begin with the last case: *v'attah tedaber el kol hakhmei lev*, “and thou shalt speak to all the wise-hearted” to use their skills in the prescribed manner in order to prepare the vestments and the Temple furnishings. Actually, a modern reader encountering this passage for the first time might well be astounded. For our Sidra, to be truthful, probably appears to the eyes of the unacquainted with Judaism as little more than a manual for carpenters, weavers, and tailors. Such a person might justifiably ask: What business is it of Moses to instruct the artisans and artists in their work? What business, indeed, is it of religion to deal at all with art and crafts? Let Moses commission the artists, sublet the contract, and not interfere in the creative

labors of the *hakhmei lev*.

Such protest makes eminently good sense in the context of modern secularism. Secularism teaches that life and society are to be viewed in segments, by compartmentalization. There is the category of the sacred and the category of the profane, and they should not be confused. On one side we have religion, and on the other side all else. Secularism does not deny the right of religion to preach its doctrine, nor does it deny to it legitimacy; it does not really care at all. It does insist, however, that religion is irrelevant to any activity that is not concerned with the other world. Let religion deal with theology, with heaven and hell, with paradise – but let it not interfere with or pronounce judgment upon society and its varied problems. A secularist, therefore, would concur in a protest against Moses and the Bible in their concern with the *hakhmei lev*, the artists and artisans.

Yet this is precisely what the Torah wants to tell us: that this whole doctrine is false! Judaism cannot concern itself only with the Other World. In fact, it says precious little about the Other World, except that it exists and that it is a fine place in which to spend eternity. Our major concern is with this world, with poverty and wealth, with peace and war, with love and hate, with ambition and competition, with the daily grind, and grime, and guts of earthly life. That is why the Torah emphasizes the point: *v'attah*, “and you,” Specifically you, Moses, who are the embodiment of Torah and revelation, *v'attah tedaber el kol hakhmei lev*, it is you who must incorporate into the realm of Torah the art of the artist and the skill of the artisan. It is you who must break down all artificial boundaries and declare as limitless the horizons of Torah and the people of Torah. So does the “Keli Yakar” interpret our verse: *K'dei she'yekablu atzilut or ha-sekheh mimekha*, the very inspiration and skill of the *hakhmei lev* must derive from the intellectual and spiritual genius of Moses and Torah. It is quite conceivable that Moses himself

was not a skilled artist, that he could not even draw a straight line; but in the circle of Moses' universal interests, his *atzilut*, he included art and science and commerce and each and every expression of human creativity.

I am therefore disappointed when I hear of very Orthodox Jews who prefer to retrench to the comfort and security of the Synagogue or the Shtibel, or the Yeshiva or the Kollel, and ignore all the rest of the world. This is an instance of succumbing to an anti-Jewish view, to the divorce of the *v'attah* of Moses from the *hakhmei lev* of the modern world.

I am therefore grieved when American Jews deny to Orthodox thinkers the right to be heard when they express an authentically Jewish view, issuing from the Halakhah, on the great social, ethical, and moral problems of our day, whether on the problems of peace or those of the proposed abortion law. I am both amused and saddened when people on the one hand chastise Orthodoxy for not being involved more in contemporary life, and on the other chastise us even more when we attempt to pronounce an authentically Jewish view which may not agree with all their prejudices. Are we, then, to be reduced to the areas of service, and Sabbath, and Kashruth exclusively, offering no moral opinions on matters of life and death – and leaving that only to the consensus of the ignorant or the moral authority of the politicians?

I therefore am happy, and delighted, and proud when some consummately obnoxious non-entity, supported by a great majority of his white Protestant neighbors, in Wayne County, NJ, accuses Jews of being prejudiced in favor of more education. I gladly plead guilty to the fact that the culture and religion of Judaism are predisposed to educate as a moral necessity for all people. It is true that I am amused and faintly irritated by the astonishment experienced by so many Jews who found their illusions in shambles – illusions that because their Gentile neighbors greeted them politely every morning this indicated the end of all anti-Semitism, even the latent variety, among New Jersey WASP's. But I am happy that Jews stand accused of provoking Jew-hatred because they favor culture and learning. I much prefer this to the revealing interview granted by a German Cardinal earlier this week in which, on the eve of accepting a Christian-Jewish Brotherhood award, he blamed Jewish assertiveness in provoking Hitlerian anti-Semitism. The senility of the old Prince of the Church was just sufficient to strip him of his hypocritical veneer of post-conciliar ecumenical euphoria and reveal the ugly inner forces of the legacy of centuries of anti-Semitism, a Jew-hatred which survives even his own earlier attempts to become a civilized human being in the

face of Nazi bestiality. If we have to suffer anti-Semitism, then let it be forthcoming for such reasons which enhance the glory of our heritage and our loyalty to it. For we are not a private cult, out of the mainstream of life. Moses and all he stands for, the *v'attah* that we represent today, includes the aspirations of all *hakhmei lev*.

The second instance of *v'attah* is the one with which our Sidra begins: *v'attah tetzaveh et benei Yisrael ve'yikhu elekha*, "and thou shalt command the Children of Israel and they shall take to you" pure, beaten olive oil for illumination in the Temple. Our Rabbis were intrigued by the word *elekha*, "to you." They said that God meant this rather specifically: *elekha ve'lo li*, "to you, Moses, and not for Me," because *lo l'orah ani tzarikh*, "I, God, do not need their light – but you and they and all mankind do."

When the Talmud meant to tell us by this is that we must never think we are doing God a favor by observing Judaism. To imagine that through our observances we are fulfilling a divine need is to revert to paganism and primitivism. The true Jew realizes that God does not need our gifts; that a religious life is not a question of spiritual trade and religious commercialization.

Unfortunately, this is not always the underlying assumption of our lives. You will not detect this primitive aspect of religion in the person who, when asked to contribute even more of his time and substance and energy to Torah, will respond with annoyance, "Haven't I already done my share?", as if what he has done so far has been a tribute exacted of him by an avaricious God who should have had His appetite satiated by now. When such a person suffers reverses, his question is always, "Didn't I do my duty?" Why did I deserve this?"

Therefore, the Talmud interprets the words of the Torah clearly: *elekha, ve'lo li*: The Torah, with all its difficulties and demands and disciplines, is a gift by God to man, and our observance of the Torah is no gift by us to God.

That is why, too, the Torah uses the word *ve'yikhu*, "and they shall take." When we perform the genuine religious act, whether it be giving charity or lighting candles, we do not really give; we take. Paradoxically, it is a law of nature and of Torah: when we give, whether it be love or happiness or charity, we really take; the more we transmit, the more we transcend; the more we do, the more we are.

Thus it is that one commentator, perhaps speaking tongue in cheek but alluding to matters of utmost seriousness, says that in this case the Torah uses the expression *v'attah*, "and thou shalt command" to emphasize that God wishes Moses to instruct the Children of Israel in

gathering the olive oil, in his own name, rather than God issuing the command by Himself: so that the Children of Israel should not foolishly believe that God needs the light, but rather understand from the command of Moses that it was meant for their good.

The third *v'attah* tells us of a sublime psychological principle that demanded of Moses that he scale the very heights of ethical and moral perfection. *V'attah hakrev et Aharon ahikha v'et banav ito mi-tokh benei Yisrael le'khahano li, Nadav va-Ahivu, Elazar v'Itamar, benei Aharon*, “and thou shalt draw near to thee Aaron thy brother and his children with him from amongst the children of Israel to minister unto Me; Aaron and Nadab and Ahihu and Elazar and Ithamar, the children of Aaron.”

How difficult it must have been for Moses to preside at this dedication of Aaron and his sons as the founder of Jewish priesthood. His own children, Gershom and Eliezer, are of no importance in Jewish history. Shortly after their birth is mentioned, they slip into total obscurity, lost to Scripture and Judaism and to world Jewry. What a prominent father – and what obscure sons!

At the very beginning of the career of these two brothers, Aaron manifested great heroism. He was the oldest, Moses the youngest in the family. It would normally have been expected that Aaron be charged with the mission of being the teacher, the leader, the law-giver. But it was Moses, the youngest, who was chosen, and Aaron was to be subordinate to him. Yet the Torah tells us, with prophetic revelation, that *ve'raakha ve'samah be'libo*, when Aaron saw Moses after being informed of the Divine mission, he was happy in his heart. Not only did Aaron demonstrate outward satisfaction, but inwardly he experienced simhah, true joy at the greatness that was accorded to his brother. No matter that he was now to be the disciple of Moses, the assistant, secondary to him, yet Aaron succeeded in restraining his quite natural sibling rivalry towards the youngest of his family. He did not begrudge Moses the greatness to which he might legitimately have laid claim.

Now the tables were turned. Moses was called upon

to rise to the occasion and not to begrudge to his brother that special historic “*nachas*” which he, Moses, was denied. Hence, *v'attah hakrev*, “and thou draw near thy brother Aaron and his sons,” it is your opportunity, Moses, to show your greatness, a greatness that transcends even that of Aaron towards you, and bestow eternal priesthood on all his children, on *Nadav va-Avihu, Elazar v'Itamar, benei Aharon*. Do not allow your personal disappointments in your own children to stand in the way of family joy and pride; witness and participate in, without any pang of regret, the special pride with which Aaron is now blessed.

It was a psychologically impossible task, but Moses was commanded to do it, and Moses succeeded in this *v'attah* as well.

No wonder that the priestly vestments, the mark of distinction of the children of Aaron, are regarded by our Sidra as *le'khavod u-le'tiferet*, the signs of honor adornment. Indeed – they were a *tiferet*, an ornament for the children of Aaron; but they were the sign of *kavod*, true sublime honor, for Moses, who was able to preside at this investiture without at all begrudging this special joy to his brother Aaron.

The Zohar, then, was right: these three principles, summarized in the three pronouns *v'attah*, serve to bring man into communion with the Shechinah, they allow man to grow intellectually, religiously, morally. They teach us the comprehensiveness of Torah; that Torah was meant for our good; and that we must erase every taint of selfishness from our hearts and never begrudge another his joys.

May I conclude by exercising some homiletic license. The first verse of our Haftarah begins with the charge of the Almighty to the prophet Ezekiel: *Attah ben adam haged et bet Yisrael*, “You, O son of man, tell the houses of Israel” to proceed with the building of the Temple. Let us re-interpret that: *haged et bet Yisrael*, tell the House of Israel that if they will remember the *attah*, the special lessons incorporated in the pronoun “thou” told to their teacher Moses, then they will reach the very limits of humanity, and they will rise to the fulness of the stature of ben adam.

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The Bells Are Ringing

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z”l

One of the eight pieces of clothing worn by the kohein gadol in his service, described in this week's parsha, was the me'il, or robe. A unique feature of the me'il is that there were a number of pa'amonim, or bells, and rimonim, or pomegranates made

of cloth, suspended on the bottom hem. There is a dispute between Rashi and the Rambam whether these rimonim were placed between the paamonim, or the pa'amonim were placed inside the rimonim. The Ramban writes that the pa'amonim were inside the rimonim, and the bells knocked

against the cloth pomegranates (which, apparently, were made of hard cloth material, thus causing noise as the kohen entered the *ohel mo'ed*, in order to fulfill what is said at the end of the section of the Torah that describes the me'il and its function, "and its voice shall be heard as he enters the holy" (Shemos, 28:35). The Ramban says that it is a function of the royalty of God for their to be a noise sounded when his chief minister enters the inner sanctum, and, in fact, all of the priestly garments were worn out of respect for the royalty of God. He also mentions the statement of the Talmud Yerushalmi that the noise made by the me'il served to warn people, and even angels, that no one else was to be in the ohel mo'ed when the kohein entered. to do his service. He further says that he doesn't understand what function the *rimonim* were to serve if, as Rashi says, they were placed between the *pa'amonim*. I believe that a closer look at the message of the me'il, will help us understand the functions of the bells and the *rimonim* that were part of it.

The Talmud (Zevachim, 88b) tells us that just as sacrifices brought in the mishkan and the Temple effected atonement, so too did the priestly garments. The me'il, the Talmud tells us, atoned for *leshon hora*, or evil talk. Rav Yisroel of Gur, in his *Beis Yisroel*, mentions the Apter Rebbe, known as the Oheiv Yisroel, who says that this is why there was a border around the neck section of the me'il, to indicate the importance of guarding one's mouth from speaking *leshon hora*. The Beis Yisroel finds further hints in the description of the me'il, to the prohibition of *leshon hora*. When the Torah says that "its voice shall be heard when he enters the holy," he interprets it, allegorically, to refer to "his' voice, meaning that a person's voice shall be heard only when he speaks of holy things, such as words of Torah and prayer. Although the Beis Yisroel does not mention it, this would be in conformity with the Zhohar in parshas Metzora, which says that the two birds that a metzora brings in his purification process, one which is slaughtered and the other which is sent out free, symbolize the suppression of *leshon hora* by the

former metzora and his commitment to, henceforth, use his gift of speech in a positive way.

If we take into account the imagery of suppressing and atoning for *leshon hora* that the me'il projects, we can understand the imagery of the *rimonim* according to Rashi's opinion, that they were placed between the bells. The Talmud in Chagiga (27a) cites a verse in Shir HaShirim (4:3), which says your temple is like the peel of a pomegranate." The Talmud says that one should read the word for 'temple' - *rakasech* - as "*rekasaech*" or "your empty ones," and explains it to mean that even the people among the Jews who seem to be empty of mitzvos are, in truth, as full of mitzvos as the inside of a pomegranate. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt'l, in his *Emes L'Yaakov* to Chagigah, explains that the temple, when viewed from the outside, seems to be nothing but an empty shell of bones. , inside, it is houses the brain, the seat of thought that allows us to function, just as the peel of a pomegranate seems, from the outside, to contain no fruit within, but, in fact, is full of seeds surrounded with fruit. Similarly, Jews who, from the outside, seem to be empty of mitzvah content, do, in fact, have many mitzvos within them, which we will appreciate if we take a deeper look.

Often when someone speaks *leshon hora* about a fellow Jew, he does so because he does not recognize his true essence. a deeper look at the person will reveal how precious he really is in God's eyes. When the kohein gadol approaches the holy to serve God, as the agent of the Jewish people, he needs to have in mind that all Jews are dear to God, who knows the inner value of each person. The *rimonim* on the me'il placed, according to Rashi, between the bells and separate from them, serve to remind the kohein gadol of this trait, and of the importance of all Jews before God. Perhaps we may add that even following the opinion of the Ramban, who says that the bells were within the pomegranates, the image of the inner content of even the simple Jew is projected by the bells, which, as the Ramban says, pay tribute to God, being within the pomegranates, which following the Talmud, are an oblique reference to the simple Jew.

Making Space for Others

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur originally presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on March 5, 2020)

The Parsha starts with *Ve-ata tetzave es Bnei Yisroel*— and you should command Bnei Yisroel. And there is a famous Ba'al Ha-Turim who points out the uniqueness of this Parsha. Moshe Rabbeinu is mentioned

by name in every Parsha, from the very beginning of Sefer Shemos until the end of Sefer Bamidbar. The only exception is this week's Parsha, Tetzaveh. Therefore, we find awkward formulations. The Torah says: *Ve-ata tetzaveh,*

ve-ata hakreiv, ve-ata tedaber el kol hachmei lev, etc., instead of the usual *Va-yidaber Hashem el Moshe leimor, tzav es Bnei Yisroel*, and *Ve-ata hakreiv eilecha*, in place of a more common expression: *Va-yidaber Hashem el Moshe leimor, hakreiv eilecha*. So why did the Torah omit Moshe's name, *avka*, in this week's Parsha?

The first answer given by the Ba'al Ha-Turim is that in next week's Parsha, Parshas Ki Sisa—when Moshe asks Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisroel for the sin of the Eigel ha-Zahav, he says: *Ve-im ayin, mecheini nah mi-sifericha asher kasavtah*—and if You won't forgive them, then erase me from Your Sefer. And we have a *klal* in the Gemora that *kilelas Chacham*, even *al tenai*—if *Chacham* issues a *klala*, even conditionally—and this *tenai* wasn't *miskayem*, it still has power to harm. Words have power—at least when they are spoken by powerful people. And therefore, since Moshe says *mecheini nah*, even though it was *al tenai*—if you don't forgive them—and Hashem did forgive them, his *klala* had to be *miskayem*. And therefore, Hashem erased him from His book—not from the whole book—but from one Parsha, right before Ki Sisa.

Ok. The answer of the Ba'al Ha-Turim is a very clever vort, but what do we learn from this? Obviously, we learn a lesson in leadership! I've seen so many sad stories in my life—of Jewish religious leaders, secular leaders, and even rabbinical leadership—where people put themselves, their *kavod*, their needs, etc., over the community, and ended up being *mekalkel* themselves and being *mekalkel* the community. It's so easy to fall into the trap of a leader. You do so much for the community. You think you're so important that you forget you're important only because you serve the community. And we have one Parsha in the Torah that specifically omits Moshe's name to remind us that he was the greatest leader the Jewish People would ever have—precisely because he didn't care about his name being there. He didn't care about his *kavod*—not even his own presence in the Torah. Moshe was the leader of Bnei Israel—he only cared about and was willing to sacrifice himself for them.

We can add a second element, different from the direction Ba'al ha-Turim takes. This week's Parsha is mostly about Aharon ha-Kohen—*hakreiv eilecha es Aharon achicha*—and all the fancy *begadim* that Aharon had. We know Moshe was the greatest Navi ever. Yet, as far as we know, he wore regular clothing like everyone else. On the other hand, Aharon had the fancy gold and silver *begadim*, and got all the *kavod*. And we even know the Medrash in Parshas Shemos, that originally Hashem

had a *hava amina* that Moshe would be the Kohen Gadol, and his kids would be Kohanim Gedolim. Yet, instead, he gave it up to Aharon. Aharon got the daily rituals and all the fancy gold and silver. And even more importantly, *yeh'yu le-vanav acharav*, Aharon got to pass that down to his kids, while Moshe didn't. Hashem tells Moshe: *Ve-ata hakreiv eilecha*—bring Aharon close to you. And this is what leadership is all about. Leadership is *li-shma*. You're not doing it for your own ego. If you're really doing something to help people, then: A. It means putting the people above yourself. And B. You're not always the best person to do something. Sometimes, true leadership means delegating responsibility to someone who is better qualified at something than you. Even if you can do everything, maybe someone else needs the *kavod*, the power, the leadership more than you—and they could do a better job. Sure, it's quite easy for me to say this right now, but *be-sha'as ma'aseh*, it's not so *pashut*. Someone once pointed out that, you know what, Aharon made the Eigel. Any one of us would have said: That's it. He's fired! We know that Kohen *she-ovad be-Veis Chonyo*, and certainly the one who did Avodah Zara, is *pasul* from doing the Avodah on the Mizbe'ach. It would be so easy for Moshe to have said in Parshas Ki Sisa: It was a nice *hava amina* for Aharon to be a Kohen Gadol, etc. But it was just talk. No one put *shemen ha-mishcha* on him yet. And now, since he's *pasul*, let's go back to the original *hava amina*—me. It would be so easy for Moshe to find a hundred excuses that he should be Kohen Gadol instead of Aharon. But ultimately, Moshe said: Look, I'm not here for myself. I'm here for what's right and for what's better for the Jewish people's relationship with Hashem. And I know that's really Aharon and not me. And therefore, Moshe's name is not in this Parsha. The whole point of this Parsha is Moshe saying: I don't want to put my name here. My name is not important. What's important is Am Yisroel. And if Aharon could do a better job at this Kehuna Gedola for Am Yisroel than me, if his kids could do a better job than my kids, then I don't care about myself. Therefore, I will put Aharon above myself. And Moshe took his name down from the billboards and put someone else's up there—because he knew that was right thing to do. And it's so significant and meaningful that Moshe's name is not in Parshas Tezaveh because that's the greatest *shevach* that Moshe can ever receive. Moshe set an example for us. Being a true leader means putting other people above yourself. If it means sacrificing yourself—*mecheini nah*—do so. If it means that someone else should be in charge because they could

do a better job, be honest with yourself and say: What's important is not what I'm doing, but what's good for the *klal*. And that's exactly what Moshe Rabbeinu did by not

putting his name in this week's Parsha—both in the literal sense and in the much, much deeper existential sense. Shabbat Shalom.

Self-Transcendence

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

In Parshat Tetzaveh we are introduced in great detail to the vestiture of the High Priest. His eight garments function, according to the Sefer HaChinuch, to inform and remind the High Priest of the Divine service that he performed. The Sefer HaChinuch invokes his famous principle that people's thoughts and intentions are affected and transformed by means of external actions and circumstances. If the High Priest looked at his own clothing, "he will immediately remember and be inspired to serve" God.

Malbim also highlights the internal psychological effects of the Priests' outer layer of clothing. The priests don vestments of "dignity and adornment" (Ex. 28:2), thereby clothing "their souls with thoughts and traits and proper tendencies, which are the clothes of the soul." This "spiritual uniform" was meant to transform the priests' inner dispositions, refining "their souls and traits, in such a way they will wear majesty and splendor upon their internal souls." Internal growth seems woven into the very fabric of each of the garments.

Two of the eight of the High Priest's garments stand out textually and thematically as the only ones to have explicit associations with requiring constancy and continuity—indicated by the word "tamid." The breastplate, known as the choshen, had the names of the tribes of Israel etched upon each of its stones, and was placed over Aaron's heart, "as a remembrance before the Lord at all times (tamid)" (Ex. 28:30). Similarly, the tzitz, a plate of pure gold with the engraving "Holy to the Lord" was worn "on his forehead at all times (tamid)" (Ex. 28:36-38).

Rashi notes that this cannot possibly mean that the tzitz

is always literally on the High Priest's head; when he was not in the process of serving in the Temple, he did not wear the headplate. Rather, when the High Priest wore the tzitz in the act of service, he was constantly and consistently mindful and attentive to its presence and message. Despite the awe-inspiring setting and the presumed piety of the High Priest, such focus was a psychological challenge. He was mandated, according to a view in the Talmud, to touch the tzitz every often to remind him of God's presence.

Rabbi Haim Sabato, in his *Rest for the Dove: Reading for Shabbat*, elaborates on the significance of these two garments. The tzitz on the head, symbolized thought. The engraving "Holy to the Lord" primed the High Priest's thoughts towards God. The choshen, placed over the heart that incorporated the names of the Tribes of Israel, symbolized the High Priest's emotions and prayers, encouraging him to channel those emotions and prayers towards his brethren.

Despite the potential for internal and external distraction, the High Priest's job demanded vigilance. External reminders helped him then and can help us now. In an age when mindfulness and attentiveness are so elusive, perhaps we can turn to the tzitz and the choshen for guidance on how to stay focused and driven by purpose and mission. We can achieve self-transcendence when we direct our focus, vitality, and energy outward. It is when we are preoccupied with our own ego and problems of the self that we are driven to distraction. By focusing our attention to the Divine and caring for others, we can transcend the confines of our ego and the limitations of our own scatteredness.

Ramban on Our Parshah: The Beautiful Uniform

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

When introducing the uniform of the kohen gadol (28:2), and again when introducing the uniform worn by regular kohanim (28:40), the Torah stresses that their special clothing is "for honor and for splendor." The clothing was certainly colorful, and it included gems and precious metals – but why does

Hashem emphasize to Moshe that the clothing should be splendid?

Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 99) suggests that the beauty was important for its effect upon the kohanim: "People are impacted by their deeds, which influence their thoughts and intentions." Their beautiful clothing will remind them

of the beautiful Being they serve.

The Rambam, on the other hand, plays down any effect of the splendor on the kohanim. He contends, “Although the garments are the height of beauty... the kohen should not focus on the beauty. The goal is only to fulfill the command which Hashem gave to Moshe, to wear these garments perpetually in the Sanctuary (Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh 33, and see Sifra Acharei Mot 5:8:1).” The kohanim wear the clothing just because Hashem said to wear it.

Ramban agrees with the Rambam regarding the purpose of these clothes, but his formulation is stronger. Where the Rambam sees in the uniform a mitzvah, Ramban says this is not a mitzvah at all; the clothing is just “an enabler [hechsher] of the service.” The kohanim wear these garments only “to fulfill the command of the King who decreed to serve with them. There was no pleasure

in wearing them, to look splendid and to be crowned with their beauty, etc. (Hasagot to Aseh 33)” Why do Rambam and Ramban emphasize that the kohanim did not focus on the beauty, and gained nothing from the beauty?

Perhaps Rambam and Ramban view the beauty of the kohen’s clothing not as something to experience, but as something to project, like the beauty of the etrog, or of the menorah’s light. We beautify those mitzvot not in order to shape our mitzvah experience, but in order to demonstrate that we value the mitzvah itself. As a gemara teaches (Shabbat 133b), we beautify mitzvot to emulate what the Jews said at the Sea, “This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him.” The beauty demonstrates our appreciation for Hashem and for Hashem’s mitzvah.

May we merit to appreciate Hashem, and to be inspired to beautify the mitzvot we perform.

Jewish History Is Like Olive Oil

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Our Nevi’im compared us to numerous elements of Nature. Shlomo Hamelech, for example, in Shir Hashirim 7:3 likened us to wheat, while Dovid Hamelech, in Tehillim 80:9 compared us to grapes.

The opening pesukim of Parshat Tezaveh imply that we are similar to olives and to olive oil. In describing the oil of the menorah, the Torah writes

וַתֵּן אֵלָיו שֶׁמֶן זֵיתֹן כִּתְיָב לַמָּאֹר
לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד.

Aside from olive oil, the Torah doesn’t delineate the manufacture of any other mishkan material. Interestingly, the Torah also prefaces the description of the oil and the menorah with the redundant phrase of וַתֵּן אֵלָיו שֶׁמֶן זֵיתֹן . Each mishkan detail and every mishkan dimension were divinely commanded, yet the production of olive oil is introduced with this unnecessary phrase. By underscoring the production of olive oil, and by prefacing it with a phrase explicitly mentioning Hashem’s command, the Torah highlights olive oil as a metaphor of Jewish identity.

Light

The obvious reason that we are compared to olive oil is that our people provide light and illumination for humanity. Famously, Yeshayahu refers to our role as Ohr La’goyim three times (42: 6, 49:6, 60:3), emphasizing our mission to spiritually enlighten our world. As it burns steady and without much flicker, emits minimal soot, and discharges no unhealthy fumes, olive oil is uniquely suited to provide

light. Additionally, olive oil is very stable and easy to store for future usage. Our comparison to olive oil showcases our mission of casting light into a dark and sometimes nightmarish world by modeling a godlike lifestyle.

Higher Calling

Beyond illumination, olive oil, and oil in general, allude to lives of spirituality. Because oil molecules are relatively light in weight, when mixed with water they rise to the top, while water, which is more dense, sinks to the bottom. The “rising” effect of oil signals Jewish spirituality. We are placed in a material world and expected to embrace it, enjoy it, and channel it for religious experience. Yet, we are also expected to slightly detach ourselves from it and to live at a healthy distance from it. The mandate of Kedoshim Tih’u demands that we temper our engagement with this world while avoiding excess indulgence. “Kedusha” doesn’t mean holiness but, more literally, refers to separateness. קְדוּשָׁה תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. Just as Hashem is the ultimate “separate Being”, completely “different” and unlike anything in our world, similarly, we strive to be apart from the physical world and its excesses. Our sweeping system of mitzvot and prohibitions prevent full engagement and entanglement in the pleasures of this world.

Oil rises and we rise. We aspire to something beyond Nature and beyond the physical. Though we don’t flee from this world, we desire something more heavenly and more eternal. Like olive oil, we rise.

Togetherness

Though oil is lighter than water it feels heavier. This is due to its viscosity, which means that its molecules cling more closely to one another and, consequently, oils, like other viscous materials such as honey, flows relatively slowly. The viscosity of oil symbolizes the inseparability of our people. Due to our strong familial, cultural, and religious bonds our people are interlinked, leading lives of greater interconnection. Our oil-like “viscosity” has enabled us to survive the extended odyssey of exile. Though we inhabited different regions and climates, our religious and cultural “viscosity” glued us together, despite the miles which separated us. Though physically scattered, Jewish “molecules” remained strong and viscous.

Insularity

Finally, oil doesn't easily mix with water, as witnessed when trying to remove grease or other oily substances using water alone. We have always lived separate from our surrounding society, preserving our cultural insularity. Throughout history, communities calibrated their cultural insularity differently. Some adopted more of the surrounding societies while others staunchly banned any cultural influences. Either way, we always carved out distinct cultural spaces and maintained uniquely Jewish lifestyle habits to prevent the loss of Jewish identity.

These are the four aspects of Jewish identity which oil captures: we are meant to illuminate humanity with religious inspiration. Secondly, we obey cultural separateness, maintaining distinct communal and religious habits. Thirdly, we rise above this world and its busyness, just as oil rises to the top. Finally, we adhere to one another, remaining deeply interrelated. Oil is a symbol of Jewish historical identity, and its features provide a roadmap for Jewish destiny and mission.

Violent Oil

However, often, when these four “oil-like” Jewish qualities manifest in exile, violence erupts, which, ironically is a fifth “Jewish” quality of oil. The harvesting of olives and the extraction of their oil are each violent. Olives are swatted off trees and, subsequently, are pressed under heavy beams to obtain their oil. Extracting light from oil is a violent process.

Throughout galus, our oil-qualities assured our cultural and religious survival. Preserving cultural insularity, we lived among ourselves, rather than disappearing into the broader population. Halacha, and in particular dietary and marital laws, sustained our separateness from the general

population. Furthermore, we didn't just live separately, but lived ‘higher’ lifestyles of personal moderation, financial restraint, education, scholarship, family values, and community. Jewish literacy rates always soared above the rates of the surrounding population. Instead of pursuing pleasure and addiction we looked for meaning and future.

Society generally respects cultural insularity, and views “separatist” cultures as quaint and charming. Indigenous societies such as the Amish and the Aborigines of Australia, which pursue extreme insularity are admired. Living on the extreme margins of society, apart from social trends, they make no effort to influence or shape the course of human moral and religious history.

We were always different. Like oil, we lived apart, in separate and tightly knit communities. However, like oil we aspired to illuminate general society by living morally and religiously surpassing lifestyles. It was this combination of oil's “contrary” features which puzzled and often infuriated our hosts. How could we be separate but also shape society, all the while as guests in foreign countries? This explosive combination of oil-like qualities often induced rage and hatred. Pursuing Jewish mission outside our own sovereign country stirred up fear, suspicion, and animosity.

Ironically, the more violence we faced the more light we provided. Jewish history has cycled through the various qualities of olive oil. We produced light, which incited antisemitism and oppression. Though persecuted, we produced even more light, which, in turn, provoked greater loathing and jealousy. The more light we produced, the more disgust we engendered. The more discrimination, the more light.

Our Menorah

We are slowly returning to our homeland, to provide the final radiant light of the end of history. Back in Israel, we are finally able to project our values as a nation, rather than as scattered but interconnected individuals. Aptly, the Menorah has become the symbol of the modern state of the Jews. It symbolizes thousands of years of producing light.

Yet the world isn't fully ready for our light. They oppose our light with darkness, hatred, and murder. We are not fully “there” yet. The cycles of light and darkness are still wildly spinning. One day it will be all light.

Bitter, Then Sweet

There is one final reason that we are compared to oil. Olives ripen relatively late in the season, and therefore, the olives remain bitter until the very end of the harvest. Finally, and with much patience, at the tail end of the

season, the olives turn sweet. Jewish history is like a summer harvest. Jewish history is beginning to sweeten but, as we have discovered, there is still so much bitterness.

Holy Garments, Ancient & Modern

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In this week's parsha, Parshas Tetzaveh, the Torah commands us regarding the bigdei kehunah, the special priestly vestments worn by the kohanim as they served in the Mishkan/Mikdash. The Kohen Gadol (Aharon ha'Kohen) wore eight special garments and the kohen hed'yot (Aharon's sons) wore four garments. The begadim of all of the Kohanim were: linen breeches, a linen tunic, a sash, and a hat. Additionally, the kohen gadol wore: a blue wool tunic over his linen one, a golden head-plate engraved with the words "Holy to Hashem," an apron and the breastplate (which carried twelve precious stones, corresponding to the twelve tribes).

The pasuk commands Moshe to oversee the making of these garments, and clearly states the role they play in the service of the Mishkan, for the kohen who would don them: וַעֲשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ, לְכָבוֹד, וּלְתִפְאָרֶת - *and you shall make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, for honor and distinction* (Shemos 28:2).

The Ibn Ezra comments: שִׁתְּפָאוּ בָהֶם. לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרֶת. - *For honor and distinction: that they shall glorify themselves with these garments (that they will be glorified), for there is no one else in Israel who will wear garments such as these.*

The Sforno teaches: לְכָבוֹד. לְכָבוֹד הַקָּל יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּהִיוֹתָם בְּגָדֵי - *For honor: for the honor and glory of Hashem, through the wearing of these holy garments for the service in the Mishkan.*

While the Ibn Ezra understands that these garments bring glory and honor to the kohen who wears them, the Sforno understands that through donning these garments, and performing the service in them, honor and glory is given to Hashem (*keviyachol*).

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch writes, "בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ" - literally means 'garments of the Sanctuary,' garments that mark the wearer as one who serves in the Sanctuary.

"לְכָבוֹד" - kavod is *kaved* (heavy, weighty) in a spiritual sense: it is an expression of the spiritual and moral content of a thing's essential character. Thus, the priestly garments give expression to the meaning of the kehunah. כָּבוֹד is the essential character of the garments.

"וּלְתִפְאָרֶת" - at the same time, the garments must be

We know that, one day, when the harvest ends, Jewish history will be entirely sweet. We just need the patience and the faith to wait until the end of the harvest.

made in such a manner that they add לְתִפְאָרֶת to the kohen. (The basic meaning of the root פָּאֵר means to shine forth.) לְתִפְאָרֶת adds the requirement that the garments not only should symbolize the spiritual character of the kehunah (לְכָבוֹד), but should be distinguished in their beauty and should be an adornment to the kohen. Through תִּפְאָרֶת, the concept expressed by kavod is esteemed as it should be" (RSRH, commentary to Shemos 28:2).

Furthermore, R' Hirsch writes, "Moshe is to appoint the workers (who will construct and fashion all parts of the Mishkan,) but they are to receive the materials for making the garments directly from the people. Let us remember that through these garments the sons of Aharon are to be consecrated and distinguished for all generations; through these garments they shall attain their exalted status in the Sanctuary as the select representatives of the nation; on the other hand, they are to perform their service in the Sanctuary strictly as servants of the nation. Considering these two aspects, we can understand the explicit command that the makers of these garments should receive the materials directly from the people (28:5, וְהָם יִקְחוּ). Thereby the people express their agreement to the granting of this distinction, and it is the people who invest the kohen with his garments" (commentary to 28:5).

These garments were so special, sacred, and necessary to the avodah, that a kohen who performed his service without his begadim was chayav misah. These garments gave the kohen his distinction, reverence in the eyes of the nation, and gave kavod to Hashem, through service performed in this special attire.

Today, as well, we have those who serve Hashem in distinct, honorable, and glorified garments. Today we have servants of G-d, the nation and our Land who don revered clothing to perform the holy service of our nation. As of this writing on Monday Feb. 19, since Oct. 7, the number of IDF Fallen stands at 574 (<https://www.idf.il/160590>) - dayeinu! HY"D.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav zt'l, commented, "If you ask me, how do I, a Talmudic Jew, look upon the flag of the State of Israel, and has it any halachic value? I would answer plainly. I do not hold at all with the magical

attraction of a flag or of similar symbolic ceremonies. Judaism negates ritual connected with physical things. Nonetheless, we must not lose sight of the law in the Shulchan Aruch to the effect that one who had been killed by a non-Jew is buried in his clothes, so that his blood may be seen and avenged, as is it written: וְנִקִּיתִי, דָּמָם לֹא-נִקִּיתִי - I will hold (the heathen) innocent, but not in regard to the blood they have shed (Yael 4:21).

“In other words, the clothes of the Jew acquire a certain sanctity when spattered with the blood of a martyr. How much more is this so of the blue and white flag, which has been immersed in the blood of thousands of young Jews defending the country and the population (religious and irreligious alike; the enemy did not differentiate between them). It has a spark of sanctity that flows from devotion and self-sacrifice” (*Chumash Masores HaRav, Bamidbar*,

p.245).

The Rav was once visited by a student who served in the IDF, who asked the following question: He worked in the tank division and his job was cleaning and maintaining the tanks. Often, his uniform would get covered in oil and grime. Did he need to change clothing before reciting the afternoon prayer, since the donning of proper attire is a prerequisite for prayer? He emphasized that it would be possible to do so, but it would be quite inconvenient and difficult. The Rav looked at him in amazement and replied, “Why would you need to change? You are wearing bigdei kodesh, holy clothes!” (ibid).

May we merit to witness the ultimate redemption, immediately and in our days, and the building of the Third BHM”K, when once again the Kohanim will serve in their priestly roles, donning garments of כְּבוֹד וְתַפְאֶרֶת.

Rav Soloveitchik on Tetzave: Divine Hiddenness and Harmony

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from *Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters* (Ktav, 2023)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik observed that Parashat Tetzaveh contains the daily obligations to kindle the menorah and to offer the incense, which are actually intertwined:

*The burning of the incense and the lighting of the lamps are merged together by the Torah into one mitzvah. As a matter of fact, there is a separate kiyum (fulfillment) of combining, almost simultaneously, the kindling of the candles with the offering of incense.*¹

On a symbolic level, the menorah radiates light, signifying intellectual comprehension, conceptual clarity, the light of reason. The incense, on the other hand, creates an impenetrable smokescreen, representing the hidden mysteries of the universe, the obscurity and inscrutability of God’s ways. At the exact time that the candles of the menorah were kindled, the incense was burned. As the smoke rose and filled the room, the radiance of the lights was dimmed by the haze. Nevertheless, the lit candles could still be made out.

In a figurative sense, this duality is emblematic of our own religious experience. In our lives, moments of clarity are routinely mingled with confusion and the concealment of God. But even in the fog the lighthouse can guide a tossed mind away from perilous shoals. In the Rav’s inimitable words: “There is a light behind the vast and cosmic drama. The distant star bears witness that divine harmony and cosmic peace prevail throughout creation.”²

Tension in Prayer

The notion that a Jew’s faith is illuminated by bolts of clarity against a background of confusion is also poignantly evident in our daily prayers.

(1) The *Kedushah*: The prayer in which we sanctify God, the *Kedushah*, draws on the words of two different prophets. Yeshayahu beheld the Master of the Universe in the Temple. It was a time of blessing and success, in which everyone could see the resting of the divine presence. The angels called to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole world is filled with His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). In contrast, the word of God came to Yechezkel not in the Land of Israel but in the Babylonian exile, where he was mourning the destruction of the Temple. His vision took place at a time when God had hidden His countenance, an act of *hester panim*, and so he could not proclaim that “the whole world is filled with His glory.” God was obscured from view, hidden above the seven firmaments. Yechezkel heard a voice say, “Blessed be the Lord’s glory from His place” (Ezekiel 3:12). In this vision, God is remote, in His transcendent abode. “Sometimes we need not search for the Holy One; we see His presence in the whole world. At other times, we must search for Him at great length.”³ The Jew is caught in and lives with this dialectic.

(2) *Elohai Netzor*: At the end of the Amidah, we utter the plea, “May He who makes peace in His high places make peace for us.” The Talmud explains the verse upon

which this phrase is based (Job 25:12) to mean that God makes peace between the archangels Gavriel and Michael, who each represent a different set of attributes.⁴ Michael represents chesed, loving-kindness, and hence forgiveness and compassion. Gavriel represents the opposite, namely, din, strict justice, and hence punishment and sometimes retribution. Despite their seeming incompatibility, God makes peace between them. In God's domain all apparent contradictions dissolve. There is no dichotomy within his unitary domain, only harmony and peace. Upon finishing the Amidah, we acknowledge the tension within our existence and pray that the time will finally come when mankind sees this harmony on our plane of existence as well.⁵

Exploring the Rav's Insight

The Rav shared the following anecdote from his childhood with regard to the theological tension of faith, the wrestling of the man of faith with mystery and doubt:

In my youth, I asked my father, Reb Moshe, why the Sages left so many questions unresolved and simply ended the Talmudic discussion with tekun [i.e., "the question remains unresolved"]. My father answered me by asking why there were chukim [statutes without any apparent human rationale] in the Torah. He explained that God wished to teach us that not every event and happening can be comprehended by the limited mortal mind. Just as the Torah remains our eternal document even with the chukim, similarly a Jew must continue his eternal march before the Almighty, even though at times he does not comprehend the events that transpire around him. Likewise, my father held that the Rabbis instituted the concept of tekun so that a Jew would understand that his faith must remain complete

*even when there are unresolved questions and events in his life.*⁶

The literal meaning of the word *tekun* is "let it stand." The Talmud employs this term when debate has reached an impasse, a "standstill." No final verdict has been reached. In another well known interpretation, *tekun* (תִּיקוּן) is interpreted as an acronym for *Tishbi yetaretz kushiyot u-va'ayot* (תִּשְׁבִּי יִתְרָץ קוּשִׁיּוֹת וּבַעֲיּוֹת)—the Tishbite, the prophet Eliyahu, will answer all unresolved questions and difficulties in the messianic era. We learn to live with the questions knowing that answers, albeit beyond our ken in the present, do exist. Harmony exists on high and will eventually be our lot, too.

The Zohar states that the word *tekun* (תִּיקוּן) is similar to the word *tikun* (תִּיקוּן), "repair," except it is missing the final nun. Numerologically, the nun is 50, which represents the fiftieth gate of understanding or wisdom. The human mind cannot attain this final degree, which is why God's decrees cannot be comprehended by man. It is only when we reach the time of *tikun*, of cosmic repair, that all the mysteries and enigmas will evaporate and God's unity will be fully revealed. At that time, everyone will apprehend the wholeness and harmony of the universe.⁷

1. Chumash Mesoras Harav, 2:272.
2. Ibid., 2:273.
3. Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur, 127.
4. See Derech Eretz Zuta, perek Ha-Shalom.
5. Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur, 145–146.
6. Rakeffet-Rothkoff, The Rav, 1:171 (bracketed additions in the original).
7. Zohar, III:27b.

A Flame in Every Jewish Heart

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week's parasha, parashat Tetzaveh, focuses primarily on the design and manufacture of the priestly vestments. The parasha, however, opens with a commandment to take (Exodus 27:20) שָׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ, pure pressed olive oil for illumination, that is to burn continually in the Menorah—the candelabra, that stood in the Tabernacle.

In previous studies, we have elaborated on the representative meaning of the Menorah and its candles. While the various branches of the Menorah represent the range of all human wisdom, the central branch of the candelabra, from which the other six branches extend,

underscores the centrality of Torah to Jewish life and, in fact, all of human intelligence. The verse in Proverbs 6:23 reaffirms that message: כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה, וְתוֹרָה אֹר, for the commandment is a candle, and Torah is illumination. Our rabbis have explained that, while the commandment is a candle, the mitzvah's purpose is to illuminate the path to Torah, the source from which all light radiates.

In addition to the literal meaning that we glean from this parasha concerning the centrality of the Menorah and the light of Torah, our rabbis have explained these verses homiletically as well. Pardesei Yosef, cited in Itturei Torah (vol. 3, p.229), declares that every Jew must light a נֵר

נֶר תָּמִיד—*Ner Tamid* (a perpetual light), the light of G-d, in his/her own heart—not only in the Tabernacle, the synagogue or in the house of study, or during the time of prayer, but also (Exodus 27:21) מִחוּץ לַפָּרֹכֶת, *outside the curtain*—in the street, in business when engaging in common matters, and especially during interaction with others.

Yes, of course, every Jew is expected to have a flame in his/her heart, to feel inspired, invigorated and excited about being a Jew and passionate about Jewish life. The well-known rabbinic interpretation of the verse that is found in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:6), אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִּי מְצַוְךָ, הֵיּוֹם, *these things that I command you today*, underscores that G-d's commandments should always be fresh in our hearts and minds. Every single day and every moment of life a Jew should feel as if the Torah was given that very day, indeed that very moment. The implication is clear that every Jew is to feel excited about being Jewish, feel the thrill of performing mitzvot, and to discover the passion of observance and the fervor of celebration.

But, remember that the interpretation of the Pardesei Yosef goes further than most conventional interpretations: Yes, every Jew must have a flaming fervor in his/her heart—not only in the Tabernacle, not only in the House of Worship, not only in the Yeshiva, not only during times of prayer, but outside the פָּרֹכֶת—*pah'ro'chet* as well, outside the curtain—in the street, in business, at the baseball game, and in the supermarket.

Unfortunately, many contemporary Jews, even those who are observant and religiously committed, expect their “surrogates,” often their rabbis, rebbetzins, teachers and communal leaders, to be passionate, while they themselves are cool about their observance, and casual about their Jewish practices. They feel as if they've fulfilled their obligation because they have delegated others to be excited for them, while they themselves are often indifferent, or preoccupied with other matters.

A major issue that is of great concern today in the circles of the committed Jewish community is the matter of “children at risk.” There is what has been called an “epidemic” of young Jews who grew up in observant homes, who attended the finest yeshivot and Day Schools, and have abandoned religious life, sometimes to embrace not only a secular lifestyle, but also to engage in socially unacceptable activities such as vandalism, theft, substance abuse, and promiscuity. Significant numbers of youngsters have also begun to run away from home. Estimates of the numbers of children at risk range from more than 6%, to close to 16% in some heavily-populated religious neighborhoods.

Although scientific studies of this population are scarce, various authorities have begun to suggest factors that might be at the root of this growing rate of defection. One reason that is often suggested is that the freedom of the modern world makes it easy to leave Judaism and slip away. Others blame the decadent values of the outside world, the overemphasis on sex, violence and materialism. Another reason often cited is that the ubiquitous blandishments of the outside world that are extremely alluring, are much more fun, and the religious world too restricting.

In her groundbreaking study of the issue entitled, *Off the Derech*, published in 2005, Faranak Margolese suggests that, in many cases, young Jews are opting out of Judaism not because “the outside world pulled them in, but rather because the observant ones pushed them out.” Margolese goes on to document how these young people, who grew up in observant families and have forsaken religious life, still have great regard for Judaism. In fact, very often, in their opinions, all other alternative lifestyles pale in comparison to Judaism. If that's the case, why did they leave? They left because they found that practicing Jews were often unpleasant, unacceptable role models; angry, bitter, mean, and at times, dishonest.

There's much more that can be said and written about the “dropout” issue. But, if we are truly serious about addressing the issue of those who are leaving Judaism in ever-larger numbers, it will be necessary for the seriously committed Jews, to step-up, and share the positive, joyous features of our extraordinary heritage with those who are on the fringes.

Now is the time to mobilize large numbers of committed Jews to serve as “ambassadors” for Jewish life, to serve as inspirational role models, who feel the passion and excitement of Jewish life every moment of the day, every day of the week, every week of the month, and every month of the year.

If we are to stem the tide of the significant numbers of young people who are abandoning the committed community, and if we truly hope to win back the vast numbers of American Jews who long ago gave up on Jewish life, we need role models, positive role models, role models who are willing to ignite the flame in their own hearts, to light the Ner Tamid in themselves, not just in the Tabernacle or in the tent, not only in the synagogue or in the school, but in the street, the marketplace, the home and outside the home, and especially in the hearts of our fellow Jews.

If we do this, we will not only survive, we will surely prevail.

Pure Selflessness

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

The Ba'al Ha'turim makes the famous observation that Moshe Rabbeinu's name does not appear anywhere in Parshas Tetzaveh. The reason for this anomaly, the Ba'al Ha'turim explains, is Moshe's plea to God after the sin of the golden calf that He forgive Benei Yisrael. God had decided to annihilate Benei Yisrael after they worshipped the golden calf, but Moshe demanded that He spare the people, pronouncing, ואם אין, מחני נא, מספרך אשר כתבת – “and if not, then erase me, if You will, from Your book which You have written” (Shemos 32:32). A tzadik's proclamation must be fulfilled even if it made on condition, and therefore, Moshe's wish that he should be “erased” needed to be realized even after God agreed to forgive Benei Yisrael. Therefore, Moshe's name was “erased” from Parshas Tetzaveh.

Rav Tzadok Ha'kohen of Lublin further develops this idea. He mentions a story told by the Gemara (Bava Kama 60b-61a) of the time when David Ha'melech had a halachic question during wartime. A number of his men risked their lives for the sake of reaching the beis midrash in order to pose this question to the talmidei chachamim. David decided not to mention their names when stating the halachic ruling, because he had received a tradition that כל המוסר עצמו למות על דברי תורה אין אומרים דבר הלכה משמו – a person who risks his life for the sake of receiving Torah knowledge should not receive credit by being cited in reference to that halacha which they taught. It seems that David was critical of these men who endangered themselves in order to learn the halacha which he did not know, and he felt they should be “penalized” by not receiving credit for bringing him this information. Rav Tzadok notes that intuitively, we would have assumed that to the contrary, these men should be applauded for their extraordinary self-sacrifice and unbridled dedication to Torah, going so far as to risk their lives to learn.

Therefore, Rav Tzadok proposes a much different reading of the Gemara's comment. He writes that to the contrary, David honored these courageous men by not crediting them with this piece of Torah. The greatest praise for their מסירות נפש, their selfless dedication and sacrifice, is that they became part and parcel of the Torah they relayed. They exercised complete self-negation, sacrificing their sense of selves. The moment a person needs attribution, and seeks to have his name mentioned, he then exists as a separate, independent entity, separate from his

accomplishment. But when a person is willing to sacrifice himself entirely for the sake of Hashem, surrendering his ego completely, then he becomes one with Hashem, and so his name does not need to be mentioned.

Rav Tzadok explains in a similar vein the meaning of the omission of Moshe's name from Parshas Tetzaveh. A person's name represents his essence. Moshe practiced self-negation to such an extent that his “name” was taken out of this parsha. He surrendered himself for the sake of saving Am Yisrael, thus sacrificing his “name,” his independent identity, negating himself entirely and becoming one with Benei Yisrael.

Rav Tzadok adds that this perhaps explains why Moshe's name is omitted specifically from Parshas Tetzaveh, which begins with the command to bring שמן זית זך – pure, pristine olive oil – for the kindling of the menorah. The perfect purity of the olive oil represents the pristine sincerity that must characterize our avodas Hashem. Our service must be genuine, without any tinge of self-interest and without any personal agenda. This is the purity displayed by Moshe Rabbeinu when he declared, ואם אין, מחני נא. He surrendered himself entirely to Am Yisrael, to the extent that he did wish to live if they would be eradicated. This is the kind of pure selflessness that we must strive to emulate.

This is something which I personally struggle with very often. In order to have an impact, we must promote ourselves. We need to use the resources at our disposal to publicize what we do, the many different Torah classes and activities that I very much hope benefit large numbers of people. We must be very careful to ensure that the “brand” we are promoting is not us, but rather Hashem. The center of our focus must be the mission, the goal, and not ourselves.

And, it must be acknowledged that Moshe's name is not “erased” from the rest of the Torah. Quite to the contrary, we speak of him all the time, and, in fact, one of the thirteen articles of faith listed by the Rambam is the belief that Moshe's prophecy was qualitatively greater than that of any other prophet. Moshe's name is very much with us and part of our collective awareness. His “erasure” from one parsha shows us the delicate balance that needs to be maintained. It is important for people to retain their “names,” their identities and personas, but only if their intentions are pure and pristine like the שמן זית זך, for the

sake of promoting Hashem and His Torah, and not for the purpose of their own fame and popularity.

We should add that, certainly, it is important to express gratitude and give people the credit they deserve. When people work hard for us, or for an important cause, we bear the obligation to thank them and commend them for their

efforts. הכרת הטוב (gratitude) is, without question, one of the most critical middos that a Torah Jew must live with. But a person himself should not be pursuing praise and recognition. Our mitzvos and community service must be שמון זית זך, pure and pristine, done sincerely for the sake of Hashem, and not for our own self-aggrandizement.

The Golden Mizbeach

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטֹרֶת קְטָרֶת.

You shall make an altar for offering the incense (30:1)

The final topic discussed in our Parsha is the golden Mizbeach upon which the ketores was offered twice daily as part of the avodah in the Mishkan. The Rishonim have already noted that here does not seem to be the intuitive place for discussing this Mizbeach. Our parsha is devoted primarily to the bigdei kehunah – the garments worn by the kohanim, while the Mishkan and its keilim were discussed in the previous Parsha – Terumah. Why is the golden Mizbeach not discussed together with them?

Numerous answers have been offered to this question. Not surprisingly, the Meshech Chochmah has a unique approach. He suggests that this “deferred presentation” of the golden Mizbeach to the end of our Parsha reflects an exceptional feature of this Mizbeach. As a rule, the halacha is that if a vessel of the Mishkan is not in its place, the avodah associated with that vessel cannot be performed. Hence, for example, in the absence of the Menorah, there can be no kindling of the lights, and in the absence of the Shulchan, there can be no Lechem Hapanim. The exception to this rule is the golden Mizbeach. The Gemara (Zevachim 59a) states:

מזבח שנעקר מקטירין קטורת במקומו.

If the Mizbeach has been removed, we offer ketores in the place where it normally stands. In other words, while the mitzvah of ketores involves offering it on the golden Mizbeach, the Mizbeach is not critical to this avodah and, if need be, the ketores can be offered without it.

This, says Meshech Chochmah, is why the golden Mizbeach is discussed at the very end. The Torah first discusses all the items which are critical to the performance of the avodah, i.e., the Mishkan and its vessels as well as the bigdei kehunah, and then concludes by discussing the one vessel which is not critical to its primary avodah of the ketores – the golden Mizbeach!

Reverberations in the Navi

As he frequently does, the Meshech Chochmah proceeds to show how this idea, which is rooted in the Chumash, reverberates later on in the Nevi'im as well; for ultimately, the Torah Nevi'im and Kesuvim comprise an integrated unity.

In Melachim1 (9:25) the pasuk describes korbanos which Shlomo Hamelech arranged to be brought in the Beis Hamikdash:

עֲלוֹת וּשְׁלָמִים עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה לַיהוָה וְהַקְטִיר אֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי ה'.

[He had] burnt offerings and peace offerings brought on the Mizbeach that he had built for Hashem, and had incense burnt with it before Hashem.

We note that with regards to the korbanos, the pasuk mentions explicitly that they were brought “on the Mizbeach,” while the ketores is referred simply as being offered “before Hashem,” with no mention of the Mizbeach upon which it was offered! With this, the pasuk is bearing out the distinction mentioned in the Gemara, namely, that in contrast to the offering of korbanos where the presence of the Mizbeach is crucial, the essential requirement for offering ketores is only that it be “before Hashem!”

Once a Year

In addition to the daily offering of the ketores, the golden Mizbeach performed a specific function once a year. On Yom Kippur, there were two sin-offerings whose blood was sprinkled, first on the Aron in the Kodosh Hakodashim, then on the Paroches and subsequently on the corners of the golden Mizbeach.¹ This annual avodah is referred to in the final pasuk of our Parsha, (Pasuk 10) which reads:

וְכִפֹּר אֹהֶרָן עַל קַרְנֵיָיו אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה חֹטֵאת הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא לַיהוָה.

Aharon shall atone on its corners once a year, from the blood of the sin-offering of the atonements once a year he shall atone on it for your generations, it is holy of holies to Hashem.

There is a basic difficulty with this pasuk, for the second half appears to simply be a repetition of the first half, stating that once a year blood is sprinkled on the corners of

the Mizbeach!

Upon closer inspection, however, we note something very interesting. The first half of the pasuk places the mitzvah (“shall atone”) before its timing (“once a year”), while the second half reverses this order, stating first “once a year” and then “he shall atone.” As such, the pasuk forms a sort of “halachic palindrome.”

What is behind the change in order?

Aharon's Unique Status

The Meshech Chochmah explains that the background to the double reference in the pasuk lies in a fascinating comment of the Midrash, (Vayikra Rabbah 21:7) which states that whereas as a rule, the Kohen gadol may enter the Kodosh Hakodashim only once a year on Yom Kippur, Aharon's situation was different:

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך למשה... בכל שעה שהוא רוצה להיכנס יכנס,
רק שיכנס בסדר הזה

Said the Holy One, Blessed is He, to Moshe, 'Whenever he (Aharon) wants he may enter, provided he enters with the following order (of korbanot).'”

In other words, in contrast to kohanim gedolim of future generations, Aharon was granted the opportunity of performing the avodah specified in Parshas Acharei Mos – known to us as “the avodah of Yom Kippur” – at any time!²

Returning to our pasuk, the Meshech Chochmah explains that the two references to atonement do not represent a repetition at all, but rather are referring to two different time-frames, that of Aharon and that of future kohanim gedolim.

Verbs and Nouns

We noted that in the first half of our pasuk the verb (“shall atone”) is mentioned before the time (“once a year”), while in the second half the order is reversed. What is behind this reversal?

- When the verb is mentioned first, it can serve to indicate that the scope of the לֹא “verb extends beyond the noun which follows. For example, the Torah says (Devarim 25:4) לֹא תִחָסֵם שׂוֹר בְּדִישׁוֹ, *you shall not muzzle an ox while it threshes.*” The Gemara (Bava Metzia 90a)

states that since the words “*lo tachsom*” came first, the meaning is expanded to denote מכל מקום under any circumstances.”³

- In contrast, when the noun comes first, it serves to limit the verb that follows to the noun.

With this in mind, the Meshech Chochmah brings us back to our pasuk. The first half reads:

וַיִּכָּפֶר אֶהָרֹן עַל קִרְנֹתָיו אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה.

Aharon shall atone on its corners once a year

In mentioning “Aharon,” the Torah is referring to his unique status. As such, the verb “*he shall atone*” is mentioned before stating “*once a year*,” For although Aharon was required to perform this avodah once a year like every other Kohen gadol, nevertheless he was allowed to perform it at any time of the year! This broader scope is reflected in the pasuk placing the words “*he shall atone*” first.

In contrast, the second half of the pasuk reads:

מִדָּמָם חֲטֹאת הַכֹּפָרִים אֶחָת בַּשָּׁנָה יִכָּפֶר עָלֵיו לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם.

From the blood of the sin-offering of the atonements once a year he shall atone on it for your generations

As the pasuk mentions, these words reflect the halacha as it applies to the Kohen Gadol “*for your generations!*” As such the words “*once a year*” are mentioned before the verb “*shall atone*”, thereby limiting the avodah to that time, for indeed, subsequent Kohanim Gedolim are not allowed to perform this avodah more than once a year.⁴

In this exquisite section, the Meshech Chochmah takes a pasuk concerning which, if we had any comment at all, we might perhaps have noticed that it seems repetitive and then moved on. Through fusing the world of Midrash with the discipline of exacting parshanut, the pasuk is opened up to reveal two tiers: the halachah as it applies to the Kohen gadol generally, and as it applied to Aharon specifically.

1. See Vayikra 16:14-19.
2. See Meshech Chochmah Parshas Acharei Mos (16:3) for a discussion as to why it was appropriate for Aharon to perform this avodah more than once a year.
3. This includes even before the ox has started threshing (Bava Metzia ibid.).
4. Meshech Chochmah, Vayikra 16:3.

The Unity of the Gemstones

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

Upon the heart of the Kohen Gadol, the high priest, lay the Choshen, displaying twelve gemstones meant to represent each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Each stone, like each of the tribes and each one

of us, had its own color, character, and temperament, highlighting how God embraces and celebrates our unique differences. Some shine like rubies, others are tough like diamonds – but we all stand beloved before God as the

high priest carries us, in all our variety, upon and within his heart.

The two final gemstones, representing the tribes of Yosef and Binyamin, were the Shoham and Yashpeh, traditionally identified as onyx and jasper (Shemot 28:20). These stones, placed side by side in the Choshen, meet again elsewhere in Tanach, in a vision of the Messianic age. The prophet looks ahead to the bright future of the Jewish people, when the tempest-tossed nation will settle firmly upon the ground, with towers built of 'Kadkod' and gates of shimmering gemstones (Yishayahu 54:11-12).

'Kadkod', it seems, is a precious stone, but its identity is somewhat unclear. The Talmud Baba Batra 75a, noting this ambiguity, claims that the uncertainty about the Kadkod has roots in a debate between two Talmudic sages, and perhaps even in a debate between the ministering angels Michael and Gabriel. There in the heavens, the angels quarrel over the true identity of the Kadkod – is this just another name for Shoham, or for Yashpeh? Suddenly, God is asked to settle this geological debate. Hashem states: Kadkod is 'kadein v'kadein', 'like this and like that.' In other words, the Kadkod is a melding of both the Shoham and the Yashpeh stones, a mixture of jasper and onyx together.

What is so significant about the identification of the Kadkod to the point where, in the Talmudic story, God is called upon to settle the debate?

In his commentary to the Talmudic story, R. Shmuel Eidels (Maharsha) draws our attention back to the representation of Yosef and Binyamin in the Choshen, the final two stones Shoham and Yashpeh, respectively. The synthesis of these two stones, Maharsha argues, reminds us of a deeper synthesis upon which the ultimate redemption lies: the partnership between the physical and the spiritual.

In rabbinic literature, the two characters Yosef and Binyamin reflect two components necessary to bring about the Messianic age: the physical salvation of the Jewish people, along with the spiritual uplifting of society.

Yosef is tasked with tending to the physical and financial needs of his brothers. The Shoham, the stone of Yosef, represents the responsibility to ensure the physical sustenance of our people. Indeed the idea of a Mashiach ben Yosef, a messiah from the tribe of Yosef is one who, like his forebear Yosef, ensures that the physical and material infrastructure for the Jewish people is developed.

The tribal inheritance of Binyamin includes the section of the Beit Hamikdash containing the Holy of Holies. Binyamin, and its representative Yashpeh stone, represents the pursuit of our spiritual rejuvenation, through their

connection to those hallowed grounds, the very site of "God's place" in this world.

God advocates the admixture of Shoham and Yashpeh. For it is the combining of the physical and the spiritual facets that are necessary for true redemption, recognizing that each is necessary to ensure the emergence and development of our ultimate redemption.

It is nothing short of a miracle to live in this generation, to be witness to and to participate in the melding of Shoham and Yashpeh, the combination of physical and spiritual advancement that propels us towards redemption. We live at a time when we have a Jewish state with soldiers on the front lines protecting us from harm. They are bringing tzitzit, tefillin, and sefarim along with them to their bases, tanks, and armored personnel carriers. They are sending countless sheilot, halakhic questions, to their respective rabbinic authorities to ensure they conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dictates of the Torah. These past few months have seen numerous grassroots initiatives emerge throughout Israel and the Diaspora in both the physical and spiritual realms, from food collection to clothing distribution and from tzitzit tying to recitation of Tehillim. We are seeing the synthesis of our physical and spiritual needs come to life, paving the way towards the redemption we so eagerly await.

May the Shoham and the Yashpeh continue to join together into Kadkod, and may God save us, physically and spiritually, from all those who wish to do us harm.